

Lorna Stremcha

(406) 265-7167

LORNA'S SUMMARY

I was a tenured teacher at Havre Middle School with a successful work history of nearly ten years. I was approached and harassed in my classroom by a mentally challenged and dangerous person during school hours. His speech and actions caused me fear that I would be raped, or worse. The administration's less-than-positive response to the situation eventually caused me to file a sexual harassment and hostile environment complaint. After making the complaint and following the chain of command within the school system with no results, I filed a Montana Human Rights Complaint with the Montana Human Rights Bureau. This was a dual filing with the EEOC.

Upon returning to work the next school year, I found hard-core pornographic emails on my school computer. When I reported these emails to the proper authorities, their response was that "keep quiet". When I asked them to trace the pornography, the administration replied that it couldn't be done.

As I pressed the issue, the administration's reaction was to try to find a way to get rid of me. They embarked upon a series of closed meetings with students and parents in an attempt to discover anything and everything they could use to build a case to terminate me. Students were taken from their class for meetings with the administration and were told to keep the discussions "a secret". While I was never allowed to meet with parents or students to discuss what were obviously fabrications, rumors were rampant. Administration leaks were prevalent although I was continually told to keep silent I also received letters from administration threatening termination. These letters lacked a basis in fact and were simply threats.

Such a campaign can take a toll. Admittedly, my teaching suffered. I was afraid to discipline any student in fear that such an action would result in more closed meetings and threats of termination. Grades were questioned. Parents called and met with members of the administration. These meetings were either scheduled for times during which they knew I could not attend or simply held without notification. I was totally isolated. These are only the highlights of a year of harassment and intimidation. Naturally, my health

suffered. At one point, I weighed 90 pounds and my physician prescribed medication for stress. In fact, he recommended that I take a leave of absence. I was diagnosis with PTSD.

When I returned from that leave, my classroom was bare. My personal possessions were boxed. Student work had been removed, was missing or destroyed. Grades had been awarded in my name that I had not authorized. In response to all of this and other forms of harassment, my union representative said simply "They can do what they want. They're administration." Finally, I was terminated.

While doing discovery, I learned that members of the Montana Human Rights Commission, members of the school district's law firm, the Montana School Board Association and Montana Teachers Union all had political ties with the superintendent who terminated me. To make matters worse, he chairs the Board of Public Education. All of these people met to discuss my complaints against the administration. These meetings were not publicized and I was not in attendance.

During the same period in which I was under daily scrutiny and discipline, male employees were allowed to use corporal punishment, have inappropriate relationships with students and drink alcohol on school sporting trips. Other topics brought to the attention of the administration during this same period included the treatment of a Native American paraplegic paraprofessional and her Native American students as well as the use of derogatory names referring to women, ethnic groups and special needs children. All these were dealt with behind closed doors. The public was never informed and no other teacher lost his job.

Even though I received a settlement, I have been blacklisted and cannot be employed in my chosen career. Sadly, I have lost my passion for classroom teaching and find myself fearful of those who work as administrators in the field of public education. This entire scenario could have been avoided had the school administration been willing to discuss openly and frankly the events that led to my filing the first grievance. It was filed only after the administration refused to listen to my concerns and only after I was told to "keep quiet". At one point, the administration represented me as a hysterical female whose problem might be "hormonal".

All this was done with union knowledge and while I was under a Collective Bargaining agreement. The union was in contact with the administration and was contacted by the administration. They did not protect me nor did they stand up for me. I believe this would not have happened had the Union done their job and not breached their contract with me. Again, these are only highlights.

I know first hand the financial, personal, emotional and physical damage that can result when school administrators, the **Montana Education Association and the National Education Association** put their own interests above the students, teachers and the taxpayers of the State of Montana. My files contain mountains of paperwork including depositions, declarations of truth, notarized documents and exhibits resulting from an arduous legal process that finally ended when the Havre (Montana) School District settled two lawsuits - a Federal suit and one filed in State District Court. These documents also include a letter from a union representative stating, **" This is nothing more than a witch hunt." Yet the union continued to allow the school administration to harass, bully and bring harm to me.**

These two lawsuits resulted from a single incident that, had it been handled differently and under the light of public scrutiny, would not have snowballed into awards of more than \$200,000 worth of damages. Funds that eventually came from the taxpayers' pockets. Ironically, as a taxpayer in Hill County, my family and I are helping to pay for the damages awarded to me. This covered the attorneys' fees. The settlement did not include my attorney fees, however the district, insurance and taxpayers paid the defendants attorney bills, which exceeded mine. The settlement was made on March 2, 2006.

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"I believe HR 2 is important for the schools of Montana. Children everyday are dying at the hands of each other and those that survive this abuse grow to develop issues that are beyond any type of healing such as clinical depression, anxiety and PTSD and documentation is growing everyday that supports this and I see it in my own work. Children need to be protected and as adults, its our duty to protect them. Please pass HR2 and help keep the children of Montana safe"

"SB494 is vital for the workplace. Many are not educated on this problem but it is one that is increasing rapidly. Peer Abuse at work not only decreases productivity within the organization but companies are losing money at an astonishing rate. This also increases stress and depression within employees along with lack of trust which is detrimental to any organization. Adults should know better but sadly, many still have a need to control and bully others around them only for their own selfish reasons. Rules and boundaries need to be set so these occurrences can stop. Our economy is the worst since the great depression. Does anyone else need to loose money? I support SB494 completely"

Let me know if I need to do anything else.....good luck and keep me posted on how it all goes.

Take Care,  
Elizabeth

<http://www.peerabuse.info> Theorist, Author and Consultant

<http://www.bullypolice.org> National Survivor Specialist

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Nationally Certified Olweus Bullying Prevention Trainer

From: Lynette Zwerneman <lzbloomy@hotmail.com>  
To: Lorna <lornastremcha@yahoo.com ...snip...  
<mtla@mt.net>  
Subject: Please vote yes on SB 494

Dear esteemed members of the 2009 Montana Senate Business, Labor and Economic Affairs Committee,

Working as an employee at various businesses and organizations in Montana, I personally encountered various instances of bullying, including verbal and emotional abuse, humiliation, and anxiety and aslo suffered the emotion, physical and financial trauma of dealing with, or escaping this destructive dynamic. Thus, I ask you to please support SB 494.

It seems our society has come a long ways from the adage "do unto others..." Our schools have become battlegrounds, children facing adversity and ridicule from other students and teacher and staff. Then we enter the workplace, in many instances encountering another hostile environment.

Workplace bullying costs tax dollars in that employees in order to survive and maintain a sense of self worth leave bullying situations and may depend on social service programs until they are employed again.

The situation costs business tens of thousands of dollars in missed workdays-bullied employees tends to be sick or take days off to escaped the hostile work environment.

Bullies need to know there are repercussions for their actions. They respond to rules and consequences and not be given free rein to terrorize their coworkers.

Perhaps we cannot legislate morality, but we can instill policy for how we conduct ourselves in the workplace.

Thanks very much for your time and consideration to this matter,

Lynette Zwerneman  
329 South 6th Street  
Livingston, Montana 59047  
(406) 222-4637

Lynette Zwerneman Firelight Media (406)223-5888

My name is Corianne Malloy and I have asked Lorna Stremcha to speak on my behalf. I was a tenured, highly qualified special education teacher and have personally experienced workplace bullying at the hands my school administrators. Such ramifications include: retaliations against my children, financial hardships, and defamation of character. Due to on going litigation I am currently unable to tell my story in detail. However, I am asking you to please advocate for those that advocate for your children and the Montana work force. I urge you to vote yes for SB 494.

Warmest Regards,

Corianne Malloy

(406) 885-3360


[corimalloy@hotmail.com](mailto:corimalloy@hotmail.com)

Kalispell, MT



Slide 1


The Healthy Workplace Act and What You Need to  
Know About Bullies and Weasels



By Lorna Stremcha


Slide 2

Bullying- What You  
Need to Know



Presented by: Lorna Stremcha  
Written by: Lorna Stremcha  
Edited by: Lorna Stremcha

Slide 3



- I was abandoned many times as a child, once for three weeks. During this time I cared for two brothers and sister. I was 8 years old. I survived.
- I lived without electricity and went to bed on an empty stomach many times. I survived.

#### Slide 4

- I was a "ward of the state" and have been sexually assaulted by a foster brother. I can still feel his class ring pounding my head. I survived.
- I was raped by a seventeen year old. I was about 5 years old. I remember it vividly. I survived.
- I once was in a hurricane. Stripes ran across our lawn. I can still smell the electrical fire. I was only about 4 years old. I survived.

#### Slide 5

- I watched my mother be beaten by every man she married. I can still see her bruises and swollen face. I survived.
- I lived with abusive and alcoholic parents when I wasn't living in foster care. I can still smell the alcohol and cigarettes. I survived.
- I left home when I was sixteen to live with guardians, graduated and put myself through college with no help. I survived.

#### Slide 6

- I was sexually assaulted, harassed and bullied in my workplace. I survived.

## Slide 7

- I'm one of the lucky ones, I can tell my story and I shall and I shall tell it often.
- Workplace violence robs the victim/target, his or her family and society of talented and bright employees, managers and etc... And we allow it, because we have no law that protects the worker from such violence. Welcome to "Bullying and What You Need to Know."


## Slide 8

- Quotes:
- "In the last decade of the twentieth century, workplace bullying is in my view, the second greatest social evil after child abuse, with which there are many parallels."  
~ Tim Fields, 1996
  - "Whilst those on the shop floor have always been at risk of being on the receiving end of unpleasant behaviors of workmates and supervisors to such an extent that it is an 'accepted' practice and one just has to put up with it', the epidemic of bullying that is sweeping the workplace now potentially affects everyone from shop floor to executive levels."  
~ Tim Fields, 1996

## Slide 9

- ### Workplace Bullying Defined
- Workplace Bullying is the repeated mistreatment of one employee targeted by one or more employees with a malicious mix of humiliation, intimidation and sabotage of performance.


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**Workplace Bullying**

- Workplace Bullying is psychological harassment.
- Workplace Bullying is psychological violence.


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**Workplace Bullying is a Different Kind of Discrimination**

- ✓ It causes physical damage
- ✓ It creates loss of social support
- ✓ It creates economic reduction or loss
- ✓ It causes psychological injury

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**Workplace Bullying**

- is 2-3 times more prevalent than illegal discrimination
- is sub-lethal, non-physical workplace violence.
- approximately 1 in 6 workers directly experience it
- is a more general type of harassment, that crosses gender, race and age boundaries.

### Slide 13

**How does it differ from sexual harassment?**

- Bullying incidents tend to be trivial and cannot stand alone to merit disciplinary action or grievance action.
- Bullying differs from sexual harassment in that it is not identified after one single incident. It is an accumulation of small incidents which slowly grow over a long period of time. Whereas; sexual harassment can be the result of a single incident.

### Slide 14

**Bullying occurs:**


- (Usually, but not always) when one person or many persons in positions of power, authority, trust, responsibility, management, administration, etc. feels threatened by another person or subordinate that displays qualities of ability, popularity, knowledge, skill, strength, drive, determination, tenacity and success, which the bully him/herself believes he/she can never possess.

### Slide 15

**How to recognize a bully:**

- They often have personalities which are described as a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.
- They are mean and vicious in private, but innocent and charming in public or in front of witnesses.
- They are convincing and compulsive liars that can lie on the spot.


## Slide 16



### Bullies display


- Bullies often display high levels of aggression
- Bullies often lack interpersonal skills.
- Bullies often display immaturity.
- Bullies often display insufficient skill levels to fulfill their positions of authority, management, etc...
- Bullies often are unable to accept responsibility for physical and mental well-being of those in his/her charge.

## Slide 17



- Bullies are insecure and lack confidence, thus causing the bully to use power and intimidation over subordinates or others.
- Bullies generally control subordinates/others by using physical and psychological strategies.
- Bullies seek to increase their own confidence by lower his/her subordinates/others confidence.
- Bullies demean, destroy and breakdown subordinates and others so they can feel good about his or her self.
- Bullies repeat his or her process regularly. The process becomes additive and compulsive.


## Slide 18



### Why do bullies repeat their process?

- They repeat the process to weaken the target.
- Bullies repeat the process to instill fear and cause the target to lose confidence in his/her self and or abilities.
- Bullies repeat the process so they can gain control and avoid his/her own shortcomings and failings.


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Bullies will go to extreme measures to get what they want.

- Bullies will if necessary recruit help from others in power positions to achieve his or her goal no matter the cost.


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Speculations as to why a bully behaves a certain ways

- Bullies behaviors often are exacerbated by their own stresses.
  - Such stresses include, but are not limited to
    - His or her own predominate behavior style
    - His or her own changes in personal and professional areas
    - His or her own financial pressures
    - He or she being bullies or intimidated him or her self
    - The inability to discern from his or her own problems of low self-esteem, indecisiveness and the need of approval
    - His or her need to make one's self feel good about his or her self.
    - His or her own addictive or compulsive problems

Slide 21



What are some of the psychological damages?

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Loss of confidence
- Low self-esteem
- Personality disorders

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What are some of the psychological symptoms of stress due to bullying?

- Anxiety
- Periods of unworthiness
- Permanent or semi permanent feelings of hopelessness
- Panic Attacks
- Periods of tearfulness and irritability
- Sadness
- Lack of concentration
- Forgetfulness
- Loss of humor
- Loss of joyfulness

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More psychological symptoms of stress brought about due to bullying:

- Detachment
- Insecurity
- Vulnerability
- Adoption of a victim's mentality
- Heightened sense of grief, bitterness, and resentment
- Thoughts of suicide
- Clumsiness
- Melancholy moods

Slide 24

What are some of the physical complications?

- Aching joints
- Aching muscles
- Asthma
- Chills
- Diarrhea
- Constipation
- Backaches
- Weight Loss
- Ulcers
- Fibromyalgia



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More physical symptoms of stress from bullying :

- Headaches
- Migraines
- Tiredness
- Insomnia
- Skin problems
- Poor circulation
- Numbness in limbs
- Fatigue
- Low stamina
- Thyroid problems
- Heart problems

Slide 26

What are the social support losses?


- Isolation
- Abandonment
  - from co workers
  - family
  - friends

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What are the income reductions or losses?

- ✓ Terminations
- ✓ Demotions
- ✓ Leave without pay
- ✓ Workers' Compensation or Disability
- ✓ Loss of benefits
- ✓ Loss of savings
- ✓ Second mortgages
- ✓ Future earnings from chosen career or occupation


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### How does bullying harm employers?

- It interferes with work performances
- It creates turnover
- It loses the best and brightest
- It strains loyalty
- It fosters distrust
- It exposes employers to legal liability
- It creates an negative image for the business


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### What do bullies do?

- They nit-pick
- They criticize
- They torment and badger constantly
- They try to get you to believe that you are doing something wrong.
- They fabricate
- They misrepresent
- They refuse to recognize your contributions and achievements.
- They constantly undermine your status, worth, value and potential.


Slide 30



### What bullies do continued:

- They treat you differently than other employees.
- They single you out and make a big deals out of the smallest things.
- They isolate you from colleagues, coworkers, and others.
- They hold their power over you.
- They separate you from your colleagues, coworkers and others.

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**What bullies do continued:**

- They keep you away from your work place.
- They tell you that you can't be in contact with colleagues, co-workers, and others.
- They spy on you.
- They take notes on you and make up lies about you.


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**More of what bullies do:**

- They patronize
- They shout
- They threaten
- They humiliate
- They try to increase your responsibility and take your authority away.
- They take your sick leave away.
- They take your personal leave away.


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**More of what bullies do:**

- They deny you training.
- They change goals and objectives.
- They destroy, twist and misrepresent everything you say.
- They dismiss you and make you feel like trash
- They make you ill and tremble
- They demean
- They belittle


## Slide 34



**More about their traits:**

- A bully's charm is always plausible and convincing when in the presence of peer, superiors or other.
- Their motive of charm is deceptive with the intent to mask their lack of empathy.
- Their words and deeds are sallow and self serving.
- They exhibit inappropriate behaviors and attitudes in regards to sexual matters
- They are often sexual harassers, racists, and abusive.


## Slide 35



**Bully traits:**

- Bullies exhibit intolerance, impatience and compulsive behaviors with aggression and anger.
- Bullies are unhealthy narcissists with an overwhelming need to portray themselves as wonderful, caring and compassionate people


## Slide 36



**More bully traits:**

- Bullies often are placed in leadership positions.
- Bullies often believe themselves to be highly qualified leaders.
- Bullies cannot distinguish between leadership (maturity, decisiveness, assertiveness trust and integrity) and bullying, which includes: immaturity, impulsiveness, aggression, distrust and deceitfulness.


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**More Bully traits:**

- Bullies immediately and aggressively deny everything.
- Bullies attack with distorted and fabricated criticisms and allegations.
- Bullies lack a conscience and show no remorse.
- Bullies are selfish, insincere, insecure, immature, and inadequate.


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**More about bullies:**

- Bullies fail to recognize or praise
- Bullies favor "selected employees"
- Bullies fail to support
- Bullies are usually insensitive to others needs
- Bullies make unreasonable demands
- Bullies label
- Bullies get others to snitch and criticize
- Bullies overload you with work
- Bullies make trivial demands


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**Who bullies?**

- School administrators
- Colleagues & coworkers
- Neighbors
- Acquaintances


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**Who bullies?**

- Business Managers
- CEO's
- Public Officials
- Law enforcement personnel


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**Who bullied me?**

- Administrators
- Teachers
- Co-workers
- Students


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**Who bullied me?**

- Parents
- Montana Human Rights worker
- Montana Teacher Union  
Representatives and advocates
- National Teacher Union  
Representatives and advocates


## Slide 43



### Why did they bully me?

- Because I stood up for myself and for what was right.
- Because I filed a complaint of sexual harassment and blew the whistle.
- Because I went against the status quo.
- Because I wasn't going to let it go.


## Slide 44



### Why did they bully me?

- Because I was different.
- Because they knew they were in the wrong.
- Because they wanted to hide their mistakes.
- Because they wanted everything to remain a secret.

## Slide 45



### How did they go after me?

- They walked each other's horses.
- They sat together and fantasized about me.
- They worked with the State to go against me.
- They went after my family.
- They worked with the FBI to go against me.
- They worked with police officers that had no confidence in the director of administration to go against me.
- They met with each in clandestine meetings secretly.
- They worked with some lawyers personal to the State to go after me.
- They lied to the media.
- They fantasized about me.
- They tried to put me into a state of paranoia.
- They spread vicious gossip about me.
- They tried to make me feel like I was crazy.
- They talked away at me destroying my life and my reputation.
- Psychologists began talking about me immediately after I was fired from work.

# Slide 46

Quotes from victims that discovered they were being bullied:

- "I was living a lifetime for women's movie and I was the main character."  
- School Teacher, 2003
- "My life was a living hell."  
- School Teacher, 2003
- "I just wanted to die."  
- School Teacher & Parent
- "I don't understand, what is happening."  
- Employee, School Teacher, School Aide, & Parent
- "I will never return to my chosen profession."  
- Employee, School Teacher, Paralegal, & Parent
- "He laughed at me, I am now living with a limp, and have brain damage, and he laughed at me."  
- Victim in the middle of litigation

# Slide 47

More quotes from bullies about their victims or targets.

- "It's hormonal."  
- School Board Trustee
- "That's to be expected."  
- Superintendent
- "It's all your fault."  
- Middle School Principal and Manager
- "You've got an attitude problem."  
- Administration and Management
- "All grievances and other such staff matters are dealt with by the line management."  
- Administration and Management
- "All grievances must go through the chain of command."  
- School Administration and Corporations


# Slide 48

Statements made about a victim or target by bullies with sexual harassment and racism connotations.

- "She's a crazy b---h."  
» Principal from Middle School
- "That f--- b---h has to go."  
» Principal from Middle School
- "Jesus Christ, \_\_\_\_\_, this is not Nazi Germany."  
» School Board Trustee




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Good management,  
administration, CEO's, and etc...

- Demonstrate and show compassion
- Demonstrate and show empathy
- Follow policies and laws
- Don't breach contracts
- Don't deliberately harm or bring harm to others
- Don't destroy other's work opportunities
- Don't abuse power
- Trespass and take from others
- Make the workplace a positive and productive place to be for its employees and staff.


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Differences between a manager  
and a bully:


■ Managers tend to their tasks.	■ Bullies strive for self-gratification
■ Managers strive to achieve their goals.	■ Bullies work hard for survival.
■ Managers make resources available to its employees.	■ Bullies waste money
■ Managers don't target individuals.	■ Bullies use others
■ Managers strive to provide their best services.	■ Bullies have no concern about the company and taxpayers dollars unless it directly relates to them.
■ Managers minimize costs.	
■ Managers maximize income available.	

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"Remember no-one can make you  
feel inferior without your consent.  
~ Eleanor Roosevelt


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### Ingredients needed to stand up against the bully:


■ Support	■ Resourcefulness
■ A high level of interpersonal skills	■ Patience
■ Energy	■ Time
■ Confidence	■ Financial Independence
■ Courage	■ Knowledge
■ Resilience	■ Drive
■ Controlled behavioral skills	
■ Assertiveness	

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- Without support you will more than likely crumble.
- Without energy you will more than likely become too fatigued to fight back.
- Without confidence you will more than likely be destroyed and become so depressed you are unable to move on.
- Without courage you will not be able to face your bully (ies).
- Without resilience you will not bounce back. And you will do a lot of bouncing.
- Without control over your behavioral and emotional state you will not be able to combat the bully and his or her tactics in a logical and sensible way.
- Without assertiveness you will not be able to confront situations of discomfort and make that phone call or send that letter.
- Without resourcefulness you will not know how to get help and use it to help yourself.
- Without patience you will not reach your goal.
- Without time you will not accomplish anything.
- Without financial independence you will more than likely lose everything.
- Without knowledge you will lose.
- Without drive you will be stopped in your tracks.


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### Things you need to know:

- Document everything
  - Some things become important later.
  - When documenting date everything.
  - Keep all your documentation in a safe place.
  - Keep it organized from the beginning.
  - Make copies.
  - Keep your copies somewhere else.
  - Keep your originals and copies safe.


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Speak out!!!

- Tell others what is happening.
- If you are fortunate enough to have a trusted friend or coworker ask them to document.
- Ask others to sign and date documentation.
- Remember the resource person is friend to the company not you.
- Realize most people will take the side of the employer. They want to protect their job.
- Realize many people choose to not believe you.

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Know your collective bargaining contract and get a copy.

Know your rights get a copy of your rights.

Get all your personnel file. Check it more than once. Get copies each time.

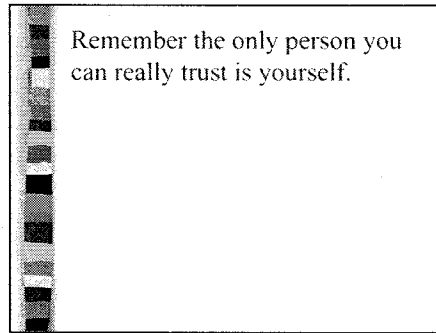
Follow company policy, even when it seems futile.

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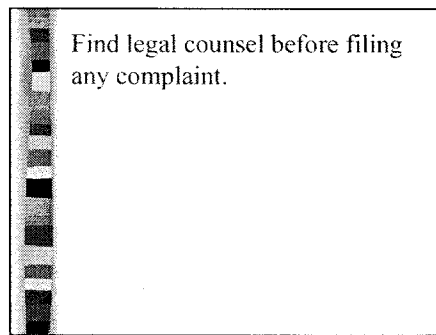


Know state and federal laws. If you don't know the laws, find someone that does and study them.

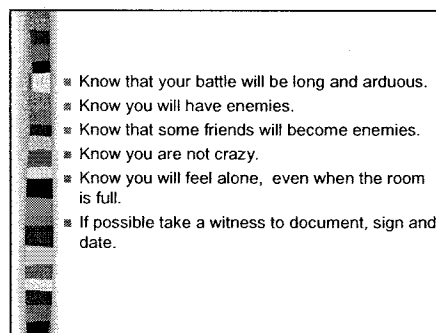
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Slide 59



Slide 60




Slide 61



How to respond assertively:


- State your belief, it's yours and nobody can deny you of that. This should always begin with an "I" statement.

Slide 62




Label the opinion being expressed as if it belongs to the other person. This should always begin with "you".

Slide 63




Expect the bully to lie about you. Remember he/she is only interested in protecting him or her self.

## Slide 64



Refuse to be silent. Support the  
“Healthy Workplace Bill” It’s a  
bill for today’s workers and for  
future workers.

## Slide 65



### Resources

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Story available at <http://www.billingsgazette.net/articles/2007/01/28/opinion/letters/55-bully.txt?rating=true>

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## Letter: Bullying happens to adults as well

I am writing in support of House Bill 213, the Healthy Workplace Act. I am the state chair of Bully Busters, a position I accepted after being bullied and harassed in the workplace. I hear from victims every day - people who are afraid of losing their jobs but who say to me, "I just can't take it anymore." They can't quit because they need the work. They can't work because of the bullying. They simply try to hang on and survive from day to day.

Now, let's move from emotion to facts:

- Workplace bullying crosses gender lines.
- An estimated one in six workers experience bullying at some time during their careers.
- Bullies interfere with workplace performance.
- Bullies do affect the bottom line. Many workers find another position, leaving the employer to bear the cost of training and retraining employees.
- Bullying does affect mental and physical health. Depending upon its severity, employees may begin to suffer from anxiety, stress and (depending upon their own mental and physical history) post-traumatic stress disorder.
- The result of physical and mental difficulties is higher workers' compensation and health care costs.
- Bullies who are not stopped expose their employer to legal liability.

Bullying does occur. Employers and employees both have a right to a healthy workplace. This bill provides the framework to accomplish that goal.

*Lorna Stremcha*  
*Havre*

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- Bullies do affect the bottom line. Many workers find another position, leaving the employer to bear the cost of training and retraining employees.
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Thursday 26 October, 2006

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## Editorial & Opinion

### It's a week for recognizing the bullies

By: Donna Smith, Black Hills Pioneer

October 23, 2006

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If you thought the days of dealing with bullies ended when students left the school system, you are wrong. Bullies don't stop being bullies when they turn 18 or 21 or 61. Bullies only stop being bullies when identified for what they are and when they are dealt with by those who abhor violence as a personal life strategy. It's national "Bullying Prevention Week" for our school children and "Freedom from Bullies Week" for the adults.

The National Education Association and the National PTA (Parent-Teacher Association) tell us that, "It (bullying) can cause school absenteeism, mental and physical stress, poor school performance, poor self-esteem, and, in some cases, school violence." An estimated 160,000 American children miss school each day as the direct result of being bullied.

Imagine if that day was the day upon which South Dakota schools take their head counts for state aid. I'll bet some action would be taken to stop the bullies if it started to cost some serious cash to the adults who now sometimes ignore the behavior and thereby condone the behavior.

You think this doesn't happen in our very own schools? A local physician once shared with me that he feared for his child's safety in one of our schools and was not receptively received by school officials when he tried to get administrative support to stop the bullies. His child felt alone, frightened, embarrassed, and like dropping out though the student was an excellent academic performer.

Notice here how I am being extra careful not to give too many clues as to the identity of the folks I am writing about? That's part of bullying too. Those being bullied feel the extreme need to stay silent and suffer rather than risk the wrath of either the bully or those in positions that could help deal with the bully. As often as



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not, the victim of the bullying is blamed for the problem, labeled a wimp, and made to feel even less worthy.

Think about this example a little bit more. A physician - intelligent, highly-educated and respected in our community - is worried enough about his child's safety to very carefully call a reporter and seek some sort of support for a problem so many parents and kids face. That in itself gives testament to how complex the problem can be to resolve.

A fine teacher I know (who also wishes to remain unnamed) tells me that bullying can be very difficult to handle if the behavior happens outside the classroom. He also said that girls as often as boys are the bullies and can be relentless. The internet has also given our children a mechanism to bully. So it becomes the business of those who do witness inappropriate bullying to speak up and not tolerate it.

The bully problem extends right into adulthood as well. It's often kept secret in the workplace. Gary Namie of Western Washington University writes, "It (bullying at work) is witnessed by nearly 80 percent of workers who don't do anything about it. It's a dirty little secret."

USA Today recently featured Namie's work as a part of an article on the increasing cost of bully behavior in the workplace. He is a psychology professor and heads up the "Campaign against Workplace Bullying." The costs to schools, organizations and companies allowing bullying behavior are similar and can be devastating. Namie said that companies that fail to stop bullying face a talent drain, decreased productivity and increased healthcare costs as bullied workers deal with severe anxiety, loss of concentration and sleeplessness. Thirty-one percent of bullied women suffer post-traumatic stress disorder and 21 percent of men do too. Increasing numbers of workers' compensation claims can be attributed to these sorts of uncontrolled and often unaddressed stresses in the workplace.

Bullies don't pick on the weak and dumb most of the time - in business or at school. "Bullies target the most talented in the workplace (and beyond) because the 'dolts don't threaten anybody' ... The targets of bullies are often the people who are strong and independent and talented and believe they can tough it out," Namie said of the growing body of research on the subject. We don't need to reach very deeply into our area's history to see a glaring example of bullying en masse by leaders in government and industry. When the 2002 Grizzly Gulch Fire ravaged the hills around Deadwood, then Gov. Bill Janklow issued appropriate public safety orders, including the evacuation of Deadwood.

Within just a few days and as fire still burned on the hillsides and fire crews maneuvered heavy fire fighting equipment through the area, the order was lifted and Deadwood was reopened. Quietly and privately, emergency personnel questioned why the order was lifted so fast for Deadwood if not to get the gaming dollars and other associated revenues flowing again, even as workers

required to return to work remained evacuated from their own homes.

Were there bullies at work behind the scenes here? Were they powerful enough to even override public safety issues? While many of the emergency personnel would say so privately, fear of job loss or other consequences made them shut up and tow the line. Sometimes, we cannot even stand up to bullies when lives depend on it. We would often rather risk death than risk the wrath of the bully. Clearly our adult handling of bullies is often no better than the childlike fear many experienced as youngsters.

So, what's to be done during this week of bully-behavior recognition?

Well, the process begins and ends the same way for our children as it does for adults facing this very real trauma.

1. Name and identify the behavior and the bully. For kids and adults, tell someone. Don't hide in fear. You didn't cause the behavior and you will need help to stop it.
2. Assert your right - and parents help your kids learn this - to be treated with respect regardless of who you are and your rank in life.
3. Document the behavior. Again, parents help your children name it, track and overcome it.
4. Seek support from those in power, and support those around you who are being bullied. Don't simply hide and be grateful it is you or your child. Bullies are cowards - don't add to that population.
5. Rally your support and report the behavior as a group whenever possible. There can be safety in numbers, and it's harder for a group speaking against the bully to be ignored or arrogantly dismissed.

And keep learning about the subject. There is help available. In reading up on this topic in the national press and on-line at various Web sites, I learned that the psychopathology of bullies in school and workplace bullies is essentially the same.

And before we think that bullies are always easily spotted or recognized by others around them, Namie's research says otherwise. "Half of the bullies are women. Bullies are often otherwise good people - church deacons or soccer moms - who have gotten cues in the workplace that they need to be aggressive. As long as we are investor-driven at work, then people are being told by top executives they don't care how they get the job done, just as long as they get it done," Namie reports. How many people you know have heard that at work? Have you said it? Has it been said to you? And are you modeling bully or victim behavior for your children?

Additional university research from halfway around the world, also points to deeper personality problems exhibited by some that might offer insight as to the human psychology behind bullying.

United Kingdom, interviewed and gave personality tests to high-level British executives and compared their profiles with those of criminals and psychiatric patients. Some of their findings are truly astounding but give some insight into why bullying behavior seems so darned wrong. The bully behavior mimics other serious personality disorders.

They found that three out of 11 personality disorders were actually more common in managers than in the disturbed criminals:

- \* Histrionic personality disorder: including superficial charm, insincerity, egocentricity and manipulateness;

- \* Narcissistic personality disorder: including grandiosity, self focused lack of empathy for others, exploitativeness and independence;

- \* Obsessive-compulsive personality disorder: including perfectionism, excessive devotion to work, rigidity, stubbornness and dictatorial tendencies.

The British researchers described the business people examined as "successful psychopaths" and the criminals as "unsuccessful psychopaths."

They concluded, "There is a strong correlation between the existence of bullying and personality disorders."

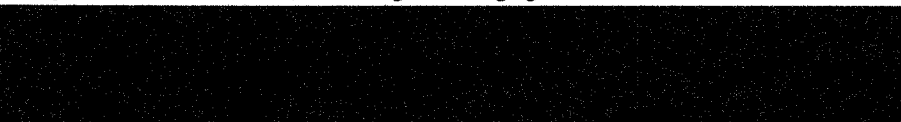
And to those of you who recognize that your child may be a bully or that you participate in bully behavior, get help. Own it. It is not OK to turn your head the other way and pretend it isn't happening. Bullying costs us money and time in our schools, our workplace and our society. It's an expensive problem flourishing under the radar but the consequences are there for all to see.

Peace and civility are better choices, cost less in the long run and make for better functioning groups of people at school, at work and in society.

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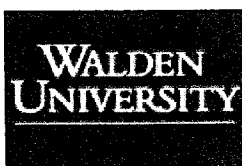
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## Sticks and Stones and Names Can Hurt You: De-Myth-ifying the Classroom Bully!

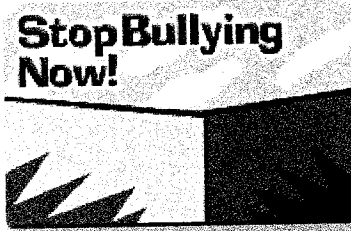
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—Character Education  
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*Bullies are raised in the home, but their victims are too frequently created in the classroom. Learn how what you believe about bullies can hurt your students! Included: Ten myths about bullies, and the research that helped identify those myths!*



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Child Safety

In the United States alone, 269 students, teachers, and support personnel died in school-related violence between September 1992 and May 2000, according to The National School Safety Center's Report on School Associated Violent Death. As shocking as that statistic is, those deaths represent only a small percentage of the thousands of violent incidents that occur each year in our nation's schools. Although no single causative factor has been identified, experts point to a number of factors common among children who exhibit violent behavior.

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In "Why Kids Kill: Exploring the Causes and Possible Solutions," Sylvia Rimm points to unhealthy relationships within the family, discord and/or distrust between families and school personnel, and exposure to violent television, films, and games as some of the elements that seem to contribute to violent in-school behavior. Rimm, a clinical professor of psychiatry and pediatrics at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, also notes, however that although not every element of every problem is found in all violent children, one constant does stand out among the children she's worked with: "There was *always* a history of problems in peer relationships," Rimm said. "All of them [children who expressed anger violently] had been teased by others more than what is typical." All the violent children, in other words, had been the victims of bullies.

According to Dan Olweus, a psychology professor at Norway's University of Bergen

### "Bullying" Resources from the Education World Archive

Education World has provided extensive coverage of the "bullying" issue as it affects your classroom and your school. Following is a sampling of the stories we've published:

- **Stop Bullying Before It Starts!** Bullying is no longer seen as the norm in the school or the community at large, and prevention has become the name of the game.

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and one of the world's leading experts on bullies and their victims, bullying is an accumulation of negative actions – occurring repeatedly and over time – directed toward one student by another student or students. Those negative actions, which can include threats, physical attacks, words, gestures, or social exclusion, occur in a context always characterized by an imbalance in strength between the bully and the victim.

Of course, the repercussions of bullying – even when it doesn't escalate into deadly violence – are rarely limited to the victims alone, Olweus says. Students in schools or classrooms with serious bullying problems report feeling less safe and less satisfied with school. Students in schools or classrooms in which bullying problems are ignored and aggressive behavior is not addressed are likely to become more aggressive and less tolerant as well. Bullying, Olweus points out, affects the social climate – and learning environment – of the entire classroom.

## **TEN MYTHS ABOUT BULLYING**

If teachers are to successfully prevent or eliminate bullying in their classrooms, they need to understand the characteristics of bullies and their victims. According to Olweus, who has been studying those characteristics for 30 years, much of what we have always believed about bullying is wrong – consequently many of our techniques for dealing with bullies and their victims have simply made the problem worse. Bullies are not, the research indicates, cowardly misfits with low self-esteem. Their victims are rarely chosen because of the color of their hair or skin or the shape of their glasses. And, perhaps most importantly, bullying is not a problem that will go away without adult intervention.

Following are ten myths about bullying that Olweus has identified through his research:

1. **THE MYTH: Bullies suffer from insecurity and low self-esteem. They pick on others to make themselves feel more important.**  
**THE RESEARCH:** Most bullies have average or above-average self-esteem. They "suffer" from aggressive temperaments, a lack of empathy, and poor parenting.
2. **THE MYTH: Bullies are looking for attention. Ignore them and the bullying will stop.**  
**THE RESEARCH:** Bullies are looking for control, and they rarely

Included: Poor and good solutions to bullying.

- ***Bully-Proof Your School*** Recognized as more than just a problem between kids, schools are called upon to put forth a team effort to end bullies' longtime reign of terror.

- ***Taking the Bully By the Horns*** All kids know how to recognize bullies – or do they? *Taking the Bully by the Horns*, written by Kathy Noll and Jay Carter, teaches kids how to spot a bully, how to recognize bully "games" – and how *not* to play.

- ***Picture Books Help Kids Handle Anger and Bullying*** This week, Education World reviews *Bullies and Gangs*, *The Ant Bully*, and *When Sophie Gets Angry – Really, Really Angry...* These three new picture books support classroom discussions of anger, bullying, violence, and tolerance.



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stop if their behavior is ignored. The level of bullying usually increases if the bullying is not addressed by adults.

3. **THE MYTH: Boys will be boys.**  
**THE RESEARCH:** Bullying is seldom outgrown; it's simply redirected. About 60 percent of boys identified as bullies in middle school commit at least one crime by the time they are 24.
4. **THE MYTH: Kids can be cruel about differences.**  
**THE RESEARCH:** Physical differences play only a very small role in bullying situations. Most victims are chosen because they are sensitive, anxious, and unable to retaliate.
5. **THE MYTH: Victims of bullies need to learn to stand up for themselves and deal with the situation.**  
**THE RESEARCH:** Victims of bullies are usually younger or physically weaker than their attackers. They also lack the social skills to develop supportive friendships. They cannot deal with the situation themselves.
6. **THE MYTH: Large schools or classes are conducive to bullying.**  
**THE RESEARCH:** No correlation has been established between class or school size and bullying. In fact, there is some evidence that bullying may be less prevalent in larger schools where potential victims have increased opportunities for finding supportive friends.
7. **THE MYTH: Most bullying occurs off school grounds.**  
**THE RESEARCH:** Although some bullying occurs outside of school or on the way to and from school, most occurs on school grounds: in classrooms, in hallways, and on playgrounds.
8. **THE MYTH: Bullying affects only a small number of students.**  
**THE RESEARCH:** At any given time, about 25 percent of U.S. students are the victims of bullies and about 20 percent are engaged in bullying behavior. The [National Association of School Psychologists](#) estimates that 160,000 children stay home from school every day because they are afraid of being bullied.
9. **THE MYTH: Teachers know if bullying is a problem in their classes.**  
**THE RESEARCH:** Bullying behavior usually takes place out of sight of teachers. Most victims are reluctant to report the bullying for fear of embarrassment or retaliation, and most bullies deny or justify their behavior.
10. **THE MYTH: Victims of bullying need to follow the adage "Sticks and stones will break your bones, but names can never hurt you."**  
**THE RESEARCH:** Victims of bullying often suffer lifelong problems with low self-esteem. They are prone to depression, suicide, and other mental health problems throughout their lives.

## **TEACHERS ARE A DECIDING FACTOR**

Bullies, Olweus notes, are produced in the home, shaped by a combination

of factors, including lack of parental warmth and attention, poor supervision, parental modeling of aggressive behavior, and an active and impulsive temperament on the part of the child. The *victims* of bullies, however, are most often created at school. "Teachers' attitudes, behaviors, and routines," Olweus said, "play a large role in the prevalence of bullying behavior." Bullying is a problem that schools can – and must – control.

**Tomorrow: A Bullying Prevention Program That Works!**

## **RELATED EDUCATION WORLD RESOURCES**

- [Ten Web Sites for Exploring Conflict Resolution in the Classroom](#)  
Education World offers ten sites that provide a wide range of practical materials for supporting and instituting conflict resolution programs in our schools.
- [One Character Education Program That Works!](#) Many schools, lacking the time and resources required to develop their own character education curricula, are instead turning to established programs that have proven successful in other school districts. Read about one such program – recently adopted by schools in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania – in which the whole community is involved.
- [Is Character Education the Answer?](#) As incidents of in-school violence become more common, and strict disciplinary techniques and increased security measures fail to control the problem, many parents, educators, politicians, and social leaders are looking for reliable methods of prevention. Is character education the answer?
- [Teaching Citizenship's Five Themes Activities](#) from the editors of Weekly Reader can help develop K-6 students' understanding of the five citizenship themes – honesty, compassion, respect, responsibility, and courage.

Linda Starr  
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Last modified on 12/9/2006 at 12:55 am

## **Guest Opinion: Stop bullying in Montana schools**

**By D. EMOGENE GILMAN**

A 16-year-old boy was expelled from Park High School in Livingston for shooting a BB gun at other students, hitting one, on Nov. 1. He also had a high-powered hunting rifle and beer in his vehicle. In October, a freshman boy was expelled from Park High for taking handguns to school on several occasions. On Nov. 8, another freshman boy was expelled when he punched a teacher, Jim Walker, who had told him to stop bumping into girls in the hallway.

"With three expulsion hearings in a month, it becomes very discouraging, and you have to ask, 'What is going on?' " trustee Kelley Dowdell said in a Gazette report. "How did we get here?"

More than half of school shootings from 1974 to 2000 were by students getting even for being bullied and tormented in school, according to the U.S. Secret Service's Safe School Initiative.

Seven percent of all students surveyed in Montana in 2003 carried a weapon to school in the 30 days before the survey, according to the Montana Office of Public Instruction. Most likely to bring a weapon to school were the disabled students. Nearly one-third of students experienced their clothes being torn or stolen, their homework or books being damaged, their cars being keyed, their lockers being trashed or their computers being broken. Almost a third of all students, and especially American Indians, suffered the same abuses.

In 1999, in grades 2-8, Dr. Joe Fontana found almost half of the students were targeted, and nearly one-quarter were victimized two or three times a month. These include little second- and third-graders!

What is the outlook for school bullies if successful intervention doesn't happen? They keep on bullying through high school, on through college. Fully 60 percent of boys who were bullies in grades 6-9 were convicted of crimes as adults. By the time they were 24, nearly half had three or more felony convictions, according to the U.S. Department of Justice. This means that cruelty when young is an early predictor of violent behavior later.

So who are these bullies? They are mostly boys, but there are also some girls, whose method of bullying is mostly ostracizing and spreading false rumors. The boys see themselves as superior to other students and feel entitled to wield power over them. They blame their victims, saying "they asked for it" or "they deserved it because they were weird." They hurt other students but deny responsibility for it. They seek an audience so they can be admired by other students, or to intimidate those who don't admire them. Some students intervene (14 percent). Others go along and feel shame for being grateful that they're not the target.

So whom do bullies pick on most? Anybody who is different from them. Lewis M., 19, told the Montana Human Rights Network: "If you're short, they get you. If you're short and have acne, you get it worse, and, if you're short, have acne and are perceived as gay, you're dead."

Students are kicked, shoved and beaten in hallways, locker rooms and in the cafeteria, mostly. Bullies pick on boys who are not "masculine" enough, or girls who are not "feminine" enough. They sexually harass girls. The most frequent victims are gays and lesbians, or persons perceived to be. They pick on people of minority races or different religions. They pick on disabled students. This behavior can lead to school shootings, dropouts and even suicide.

Teachers report that they intervene 70 percent of the time when they see bullying. But much of this abuse is out of their sight. And students complain too often that the school takes no action. And, worst of all, some teachers and staff participate, either by ignoring it or initiating it.

The statewide Safe Schools Coalition wants to stop school bullying. We want kids to feel safe enough to leave their weapons at home. We alert school districts that they have a duty, reinforced by legal liability, to change a school culture that tolerates cruelty. We offer workshops to provide teachers, administrators and staff with the skills and resources they need to fulfill their duty of providing a safe educational experience for all students.

School policies need to be revised and teachers and staff supported so they can intervene appropriately and safely.

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